

514th FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

630th Bombardment Squadron (Dive) constituted, 4 Feb 1943

Activated, 1 Mar 1943

Redesignated 514th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 10 Aug 1943

Redesignated 514th Fighter Squadron, 30 May 1944

Inactivated, 20 Aug 1946

Redesignated 514th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 25 Jun 1952

Activated, 10 Jul 1952

Redesignated 514th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 1 Apr 1954

Discontinued and inactivated, 8 Jan 1961

STATIONS

Key Field, MS, 1 Mar 1943

Congaree AAFld, SC, 18 Sep 1943-13 Mar 1944

Ashford, England, 5 Apr 1944

Tour-en-Bassin, France, 27 Jul 1944

Cretteville, France, 17 Aug 1944

St Leonard, France, 28 Aug 1944

Mourmelon, France, 24 Sep 1944 (operated from Prosnes, France, 22-31 Jan 1945)

Metz, France, 31 Jan 1945

Asch, Belgium, 6 Feb 1945

Handorf, Germany, 15 Apr 1945

Nordholz, Germany, 5 Jun 1945-20 Aug 1946

Manston RAF Station, England, 10 Jul 1952
Ramstein/Landstuhl, Germany, 15 May 1958-8 Jan 1961

ASSIGNMENTS

406th Bombardment (later Fighter Bomber; Fighter) Group, 1 Mar 1943-20 Aug 1946
406th Fighter Bomber (later Fighter Interceptor) Group, 10 Jul 1952
406th Fighter-Interceptor Wing, 1 May 1956
86th Fighter Interceptor Wing, 15 May 1958
86th Air Division, 18 Nov 1960-8 Jan 1961

WEAPON SYSTEMS

A-20
A-24
A-25
A-26
A-35
A-36
UC-78
BC-1
P-39,
P-40, 1943
P-47, 1943-1946
P-47D
P-47G
F-84, 1952-1953
F-86, 1953-1960

COMMANDERS

LTC George H. Hubler, #1955

HONORS

Service Streamers

American Theater

Campaign Streamers

Air Offensive, Europe

Normandy

Northern France

Rhineland

Ardennes-Alsace

Central Europe

Air Combat, EAME Theater

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

None

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations

France, 7 Sep 1944

Belgium, 23-27 Dec 1944

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

31 Oct 1955-31 Oct 1958

EMBLEM



514th Fighter-Bomber Squadron emblem

514th Fighter Interceptor Squadron emblem: On a disc, checky, white and black, within a double border, blue and of the first, a chess queen of the third, detail white. (Approved, 1 Mar 1955)

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Combat in ETO, 9 May 1944-6 May 1945. The squadron insignia, depicting a blue chess queen superimposed on a checkerboard background, symbolizes not only the checkered career of this onetime Air National Guard unit, but also brings into sharp focus the analogy between the versatile chess queen as the dominant unit with its aggressive freedom of movement, and the squadron's mission of delivering interceptive blows in any direction with lightning swiftness.

Commander of the squadron since July 1954 is Lt. Col. George O. Hubler, who previously led the 440th Fighter Interceptor Squadron at Geiger AFB, Wash. He was already credited with over 130 flying hours on F-84D Sabrejets when came to the squadron, making him one of the unit's most experienced pilots on these aircraft. Two flight commanders and operations officer Capt. Harold D. LaRoche have been flying the radar interceptors since the inception of the F-86D program in the U.S.A.F.

Activated on 4 March 1943 at Key Field, Meridian, Mississippi, the squadron had designation of 630th Bombardment squadron (Dive) and was a component of the 406th Bombardment Group (Dive). It was a rather unimpressive beginning with only a nucleus of 23 enlisted men and officers, all weaned from the parent group—48th Bombardment Group (D). Lt. John L. Pegues, was first squadron commander.

In spite of heat and fatigue, the originals maintain a steady pace along the curving, dusty roads that were common in Mississippi.

The early stages of our tenure on Key Field after activation were devoted to organization and training of personnel. On the 26th of August 1943 the 514th first assumed its new designation in compliance with General Order Number 37, Section II, Paragraph I of the III Fighter Command, which dealt with the redesignation of the entire 406th Bombardment Group (D) as the 406th Fighter Bomber Group.

Simultaneously with this change, our squadron combined with the 631st of the same group to form one of the most aggressive units in the Army Forces. Majority of personnel of the organization from Lt. Pegues, commander, down through the enlisted ranks were kept intact and were augmented by a good share of men from the 631st. Aside from this renaissance and training and process of organization, nothing else of consequence was accomplished.

As the tempo of world conflict quickened, so did our program of training as was evidenced by the change of stations on 18 September 1943. This initial move of the Group brought us to the Congaree Air Field, situated near the city of Columbia, in South Carolina. Without much ado a rigid program of training was initiated for both enlisted and flying personnel. This was rather difficult at the time because of the limited number of aircraft assigned to the squadron. However, it wasn't too long before the much overworked A-24's and lone BC-1 were joined by several sleek-appearing P39 Aircobras. In step with this welcome addition of aircraft, a spirit of combat-preparedness pervaded the entire squadron and as a consequence all worked harder to make this a first-rate outfit.

The 5th of October marked the arrival of our new commanding officer in the person of Captain Gene L. Arth, who had several months of combat experience in the Alaskan Campaign, where he earned the Air Medal and was credited with one Japanese Float-equipped Zero. Shortly after Captain Arth's assumption of command, Lt. Pegues, original commander, departed, as did Lt. Colonel Harper, Group Commander. Their transfer and that of approximately 60% of the flying

personnel in the group was necessitated by the dire need of more experienced pilots. This development alone strongly indicated that we were absolutely destined to see foreign service.

As the more experienced pilots began to arrive, a more intensive program ensued in all phases of flying with special emphasis being placed on bombing and gunnery. This period was ultimately peaked with acquisition of our final type of aircraft—the P-47 Thunderbolt—and eventually led to our departure for Wampee Strip where gunnery and bombing missions were actually performed under field conditions. The weather was quite adverse in early part of our stay there, hampering operations and making living as uncomfortable as it possibly could be. But, in the waning days it cleared sufficiently to permit many valuable hours of greatly needed gunnery training to be accomplished. It was here on this desolate, mud-clogged air strip that the pilots and ground personnel were christened to combat conditions—conditions that were waiting them just beyond the horizon.

The following period was monopolized by final preparedness for our departure to a destination somewhere on a wide global combat front. No one dared to venture a guess on our final disposition until the ominous date of 13 March 1944 on which date the 406th contingent was shunted to Camp Shanks, Port of Embarkation, near the city of New York. Then and only then did the majority sense undue proximity to the vaunted Wehrmacht war machine that was raising havoc in the European Theatre. This grim thought of stepping into a combat zone against a highly trained war machine fashioned by Adolph Hitler didn't deter our anxiety to go over, but advanced our hopes considerably to pit our untried qualities against his seasoned troops.

Our brief stay at Camp Shanks was culminated on 22 March 1944 at which time we, among other groups in the Army Air Forces, boarded the H.M.T. Starling Castle. Early the following morning our ship left the pleasant shores of the U.S. The ensuing voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, though tedious at times, proved to be interesting yet uneventful. Numerous cases of seasickness were experienced but on the whole rapid orientation to this mode of travel was observed.

After 13 days at sea, the worthy Starling Castle finally sailed into Liverpool, England, safely on 4 April 1944. Without semblance of doubt everyone was extremely delighted to see land once again. Shortly after landing, half of the squadron proceeded to our new station in Ashford, Kent near Dover. The remaining half stepped off the boat the following morning and continued to same destination via the same route. It was a dreary outlook from the initial glance at the surrounding area, with tent life as the most disconcerting factor. However, predominating thoughts of eliminating the enemy soon eradicated personal comfort for the business ahead.

Very little in the way of operational flights was accomplished in the embryo days of Station 417. For the most part we were concentrating on organization and acquisition of the necessary equipment. Our position at the time placed us only a mere seven minutes flying time to the Nazis.

Early in May Lt. Bernard F. Dugan, one of our promising airmen, lost his life in a heroic deed by which he saved the lives of three companions. Later Lt. Dugan was awarded the Soldier's Medal posthumously for his action.

After all preliminary tasks had been disposed of, we were prepared for our first flight, which was a squadron formation flown in P-47s led by our squadron commander Major Gene L. Arth. His capable flight leaders were Lt. J.C. Bloom, Lt. R.L. Saux, Lt. F.L.L. Dowell and Lt. J.E. Wilkes. On 21 April 1944, Major Arth and Lt. Dowell joined the 337th Fighter Bomber Squadron of the 362nd Fighter Bomber Group for purpose of orientation in combat flight. Each was required to participate in three such missions before assuming the responsibilities of flight commander in our unit.

It was during this acclimation period that Major Arth became the first war casualty in the squadron. He was killed on 22 April 1944, while on his second mission of that day. While in the act of strafing a train two miles west of Lingen, Germany, Major Arth's aircraft was severely pummelled by anti-aircraft fire causing it to crash. Lt. Dowell, in the meantime, returned safely to the squadron.

The squadron operated without a commanding officer until 3 May 1945, then Captain C.B. Kelly, heretofore operating in the capacity of Operations Officer, was delegated to the role. Captain G.I. Ruddell, veteran of the Asiatic Theatre, was installed as the new Operations Officer. The remaining period during the month of April was devoted to last minute polishing in varied phases of flying and all-important ground school cramming.

In the wee morning hours of 9 May 1944, we were alerted for our first mission against the Nazis. At last realization of long awaited expectations would be put into play. Needless to mention, signs of excitement imbued all personnel. Led by Captain C.B. Kelly, our unit participated in a Group Fighter sweep over France from Berck-sur-Mer, Compeigne, Les Andelys, to St. Valery-N-Caux. The first actual mission against the enemy proved quite uneventful to the surprise and chagrin of all participants as neither enemy aircraft nor flak was observed along the entire route. The following three days saw the 514th again sweeping over France over such familiar cities as Le-Treport, Beauvais, Ham, Ceyeux, Grand Villiers Aumale, South Hardelot, Le-Tuesnay, Ghent and Dunkirque. Results in all flights were considered satisfactory though enemy aircraft was still in hiding. On the other hand, traces of anti-aircraft fire showed up to molest our boys.

Three months to the day after farewell to Congaree Air Field, 13 May 1944, was our first assignment to escort work. With Captain C.B. Kelly again assuming the leadership role, our "Raiders" guided 36 B-26 Marauders to their target at Abbeville, France, and back home without a mishap. Bomb hits were observed on revetments over the target area but neither enemy aircraft nor flak was encountered.

Another first in our varied forms of attack was fulfilled on 19 May 1944 when a locomotive workshop at Cambrai, France, was dive-bombed. Seven hits were reported in the yard area and

several of them were observed to demolish a bridge west of target. Flak was noted two miles north of Hardelot, France, and a flak disc was seen by Lt. Jay C. Bloom.

Our sincere efforts to drive into the heart of the hinterlands of Germany became a reality on 21 May 1944 with the precarious task of attacking rolling stock at Tirlmont, Germany. It proved to be a profitable journey to us but a costly one to the enemy as claims were made on five locomotives, two trains and sheds in the marshalling yards. During the remaining days in the month of May and first part of June, we participated in a wide variety of sweeps, bombing missions and escorts. Daily missions were increased to four and five as blow after blow was dealt to Hitler's regime firmly established on French soil. This softening up process continued relentlessly day after day with areas along the English Channel catching the brunt of our assaults.

This needle-point concentration by the Army Air Forces was source for many wild rumors and predictions as to approximate date of the inevitable invasion. But, it was not rightfully known or ascertained until 2030 hours on the 5th of June 1944 when the entire complement of flying personnel in the Group and those immediately connected with this phase were summoned to an all-important meeting. All precautions were made to prevent any unauthorized personnel from entering the briefing tent. At exactly 2035 hours Group Commander Colonel Anthony V. Grossetta arrived on the scene with the exhilarating disclosure of the forthcoming invasion. He informed those in attendance that within a few short hours, the shores of Nazi be-clouded France would be stormed by U.S. and British paratroopers and Glider units and they in turn would be joined by landing troops, Naval and artillery fire. As a result of this dramatic information, excitement ran rampant throughout the ranks. Mingling thought of being in on one of the greatest landing assaults ever attempted in military history dominated. Sleep was out of question as everyone girded himself for the grim and deliberate part he was to play in the epoch-making invasion.

At 0400 hours on the morning of 6 June 1944 the pilots selected for the first mission were briefed thoroughly and by 0440 hours the first ship was airborne in the murky dawn that only England can boast about. Our foremost duty on this momentous day was to provide air cover over the invasion area. At 0640 hours all planes returned from their two hour flight. Pilots hurried to their respective briefing tents and related incredible tales of the vast and incalculable numbers of aircraft patrolling the same area and innumerable naval craft concentrating their barrages on the French beaches. All day long, this watchful, alert patrolling continued and was again resumed the following day. Beginning at the early hour of 0400 on each of these days, our ships and pilots maintained a close vigil over Allied assaulting troops for approximately 20 of 24 hours. During all these combat flights, the Luftwaffe, scourge of European skies before the Allied air power took its toll, remained conspicuously in hiding despite importance of gigantic operations at hand. Spasmodic appearances were made by small groups of FW-190's and ME-109's but their languid efforts were stymied by more fortunate pilots from other units.

After our ground troops had attained a firm hold on the beaches, our principal duty was centered on various ground installations that might impede progress. Thus the remaining

period in the month of June was devoted wholeheartedly to liquidation of defense positions, bridges, communications centers and rolling stock. The Cherbourg Peninsula, in particular, received a thorough going over by the 514th. Completeness and thoroughness of destruction and havoc created in these areas is evidenced by the 133 tons of bombs dropped and 130,000 rounds of Caliber 150 ammunition expended in strafing.

Only casualty suffered during the operations over the beach-heads was Flight Commander Lt. J.E. Wilkes, who had been shot down on 7 June 1944 over the Utah sector. However, as the fury of battle increased, a heavy toll of lives and good American blood was spilled. Perhaps the heaviest price in human lives was exacted from the 514th during this month.

Next to leave our ranks due to enemy action was Lt. M.E. Isbell. While on an armed reconnaissance mission four miles north of Argentan, France, on 10 June 1944, Lt. Isbell was shot down by enemy aircraft. He was followed by Lt. M.A. Benson, on 17 June 1944, who, after being critically wounded and his Thunderbolt badly damaged by anti-aircraft, plunged into a German gun position. Lt. Benson was ultimately awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. Same day Lt. L.A. Burton disappeared mysteriously while participating in an armed reconnaissance mission. Details and location of his demise are still wanting.

With his great Luftwaffe torn to shreds, Adolf Hitler resorted for the time, on a new scientific weapon—The Robot Bomb—to wreak vengeance on the city of London. Placed in the path of these harassing bombs or "Doodle Bugs" as they were labeled, it was our novel experience to witness fall of them all-around our base. As luck would have it, we fortunately escaped its wrath completely. Although virtually every "Doodle Bug" released had to pass over our field on its way to London, Lt. Billington was first pilot in the Group to shoot one down.

Several days later, 24 June 1944, intensive German anti-aircraft claimed another victim in Lt. J.L. Billington. He went down about 1/4 mile east of Durval, France. Another reconnaissance mission to Dreux, France, took two more of our original and capable pilots. Going down on the same flight were Lts. L.C. Beck and E.R. Gaudet. Lt. Beck was downed by the Luftwaffe, while Lt. Gaudet's fate remains a deep secret.

Distinction of being first squadron pilot to be credited with a swastika marked plane goes to Lt. M. Jones. Claims were also made by Lts. Saux, Wood and McLane, who were involved in the dog-fight but photographs produced evidence that Lt. Jones' marksmanship was best.

The month of July proved to be an extraordinarily active one as an all-out effort by the Allies, both air and ground forces, succeeded in extending the beach heads and also was instrumental in plaguing the notorious German horde to extent that organized resistance was getting visibly weaker every day. The Air Forces, in particular, found the going more difficult with extremely adverse weather to cope with. At any rate, the 514th continued stalking its prey obstinately with an average of at least two missions per day.

Highlight of the month presented itself on 4 July 1944, a national holiday in the U.S. in commemoration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Ironically, the long-cherished subject of peace was completely obliterated from the minds of those involved in a war to restore this same tranquility. Instead of the celebration, our unit continued to scour European skies for "bandits," strafed armored columns, disrupted communications and, in short, raised havoc with anybody or anything connected to the Axis.

While on one of these harassing raids over the Avaranche area, our inimitable airmen encountered eight to 10 enemy ships in that vicinity. The results were strictly in our favor with claims being made by Captain E.C. Heckman and Lt. U.M. Roth. Lt. Colonel L.R. Bratton, Deputy Group Commander, also scored in the aerial duel with a probable. Not to be outdone, Lt. N. Lewin-Epstein bagged his "Jerry" the next day, 5 July 1944. On the same mission Lt. E.E. Springer was missing in action.

An accidental wound inflicted on T/Sgt. C.E. Lavender on 3 July 1944, proved fatal the following day, cutting short his military career and brief combat service. T/Sgt. Lavender had been one of the original cast and one of the important cogs in our armament section.

At this stage of the war, the trend of battle proceeded beyond expectations, making our position in Ashford highly unfavorable for close ground support—our principal objective. Consequently, the advance echelon of the squadron departed from the station on 18 July 1944 for France via the marshalling grounds in Southampton. The trip across the now placid waters of the English Channel was made on the Lucius Q.C. Lamarr—a Liberty ship.

While the air echelon was occupied with travel, ground crews left behind in Ashford, Kent, experienced an unusually busy time servicing our ships for any number of missions. All efforts against the Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe were highly successful but the three flown on 20 July proved most fruitful from the standpoint of damage. The three missions combined completely destroyed a train-load of tanks in the neighborhood of Rouen and Amiens. Then pressed forward relentlessly to bomb railroad bridges and strafe and destroy valuable goods cars intended for the front.

On 25 July 1944 our Group and squadron participated in the mass-bombing of an area between St. Lo and Perriers. The breakthrough at this point by armored and infantry troops depended largely on the success of this mission. The results, of course, hardly merit further elaboration since everything worked out as planned. Fine execution of this strategy drew commendable remarks from Brigadier General O.P. Weyland, Commanding General, Headquarters, IX Fighter Command, and other military dignitaries.

The last day of the month, our ground echelon scanned English skies wistfully for signs of another Robot, breathed a sigh of relief—then reluctantly left the station to join forces with the advance echelon on French soil. The latter reached the scene of operations at Tour-en-Bessin on 27 July 1944 while former arrived there on 4 August 1944. Combat operations continued undisturbed during these movements.

Working under severest of conditions and making the most of field expediency, 514th's "Raiders" incessantly stabbed their deadly fangs into enemy strong points facing our speeding troops. At this point, as part of the XIX Tactical Air Command, the 406th Fighter Group combined forces with Lt. General George S. Patton's Third Army to form one of the most formidable air and ground combinations in history. Success with which these two teams functioned proved conclusively for the first time the significance of a powerful Tactical Air Command.

At any rate, it was not long before the fluid front moved away from effective reach of our vital air arm so another move became necessary. Before consummation of this plan, however, another member of our fold was missing in action. He was Lt. B.L. Cramer, who went down on 7 August 1944 approximately 6 miles southwest of St. Mennehould, France. Lt. Cramer's Thunderbolt was believed to be hit by anti-aircraft fire.

With intentions of occupying the airfield at Lessay, our advance echelon again "hit the road" on 14 August 1944. But, the stay there was short-lived due to large amount of work needed to make the Strip operational. Next step was to proceed to Strip A-14 near Cretville, France.

Even this switch of air strips seemed like an idle gesture, taking into consideration that rapidity of our advancing infantry divisions and armored columns was taking the fighting front far from our bases. Anyway the move was affected on 17 August 1944. Sparked by the unerring leadership of our commander, Major C.B. Kelly, we carried the fight to the enemy with incomparable tenacity. It was an unduly difficult problem flying from this station because of great distances that had to be covered to and from targets.

This created additional maintenance work for group crews which were already an overworked lot. However, with finest cooperation and spirit of enthusiasm, a high degree of maintenance work provided more than usual quota of Thunderbolts required to complete the necessary missions.

Although Dame Fortune had treated us more fairly in recent weeks, another of our capable pilots fell by the wayside. He was Lt. R.L. Wood, more popularly known as "Woody the Wolf" to his compatriots. Lt. Wood went gloriously on 23 August 1944 near Mantes-Gassicourt, France, while fulfilling his part in an armored column support mission. The brighter side of the picture, on the other hand, presented us with Lt. E.E. Springer, who had been missing since 5 July 1944. Lt. Springer was aided and abetted in his return by French civilians.

Incidentally, our unit participated in its first propaganda leaflet mission from this strip. The leaflets were dropped over the German troops trapped on Brest Peninsula.

When Lt. General Patton's phenomenal armies bypassed beleaguered German troops on Brest Peninsula and plunged eastward across France, we were forced to follow suit by making a comparatively long trek to our new destination—Loupeland, France, or Air Strip A-36 according

to its military designation. The same problem of distance existed here but we remained for approximately four weeks. Daily missions were flown in direct support of our brothers in service—Third Army—punching and staving off every thrust directed at them by Hitler's fanatical contingent.

Along in this period we lost one of our veteran flight commanders in the person of Captain E.C. Heckman. He was brought down by flak while engaged in a close ground support mission. Ironically, this quirk of fate deprived Captain Heckman of a rest leave in the U.S., which he was expecting in a couple of days. A day later Lt. R.T. Shelton met the same fate while on an armored column support mission. The third and last loss in valuable flying personnel while at Loupeland occurred to Lt. R.W. McHugh, who was wounded in action while dive-bombing.

First of two principal accomplishments by our splendid airmen occurred on 1 September 1944 on which date the 514th, led by Major G.I. Ruddell, raked up and down Metz Airdrome with damaging machinegun fire to account for the appalling number of 12 planes destroyed and 20 or more damaged. Lt. Hilton L. Lewis was discoverer of this pilot's dream through a break in a heavy cloud layer and immediately reported his revelation to Major Ruddell. Despite low fuel and ammunition supply since they were returning from another mission, Major Rudell unhesitatingly led his "Raiders" down for the killing. This, by far, was the best hunting day to date.

Foremost and perhaps most appreciable commendation for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict was the Unit Presidential Citation justly awarded to our 406th Fighter Group for action south of the Loire river on 7 September 1944. Thirty-six P-47s of the Group, 12 of them 514th's, raced south of the Loire river in the vicinity of Chateauroux, France, to find and destroy a column of enemy vehicles and military transport, which was attempting to escape from southeastern France through the Belfort Gap. As a result of decisive destruction and ferocity of attack, General Elster, his staff and 20,000 troops were forced to capitulate. During the surrender, General Elster requested presence of Brigadier General O.P. Weyland, Chief of XIX Tactical Air Command, to insure cessation of further air attacks.

Assuming the role of "Gypsy Caravan" again in vain attempt to catch up with the flying "Third," we took a circuitous course around the gay city of Paris to reach our new airfield at Mourmelon on 24 September 1944. It was a base formerly used by the Luftwaffe with slight topographical changes created by Allied heavy bombardment planes. Nevertheless, the field was quickly whipped into shape in time for our arrival. Weather, for most of October, seriously hampered operations, permitting only 19 flyable days. Nonetheless, many missions were piled up dive-bombing rail yards, tunnels, bridges and rail line in the difficult terrain around Metz.

Late afternoon on the 9th of October our Thunderbolts were hurriedly called to bomb a wooded area in the sector around Metz with fragmentation bomb clusters. The mission was accomplished with usual efficiency but results could not be recorded because close observation was impossible. However, future commendation received from Brig. General Weyland revealed that heavy concentration of German troops in this wooded area had been virtually annihilated

by murderous effect of the fragmentation bombs. When the III Corps advanced into this position, they found the "Jerries" highly demoralized and walking around senselessly among innumerable casualties, who were lying around grotesquely. Twenty-five hundred more prisoners were taken into custody without a single mishap to our infantry.

Two other occasions during October, the fighting 514th, conforming with the "Seek," "Attack," and "Destroy," motto of the 406th Fighter Group, accredited itself nobly in battle. The first came on 20 October 1944 when a long train loaded with vehicles was heavily strafed in the neighborhood of Bad Kreuznach, Germany. Unfortunately the weather closed in to prevent a repeat mission over the same area.

Couple of days later, 22 October 1944, an armed reconnaissance flight revealed two trains of 50 or more cars containing half tracks and trucks in sector of Hagenau, Germany. After several excellent bombing runs, our blue-nosed "Bolts" returned to strafe the long column of cars with deadly effect. Discounting the precariousness of returning to a target after the first attack, our intrepid pilots neglected customary tactics to make eight more passes over the crazy kilt disorder of railroad cars to make sure of positive destruction. This time display of valor was considered extraordinary since the target was well camouflaged. Photographs of the burning pyre disclosed only a mass of twisted steel lying beneath a long curling plume of smoke.

Willing self-sacrifice, courage and zealousness on the part of our flyers proved expensive once again when Lt. C.W. Frederick was reported "KIA." He was engaged in an armed reconnaissance mission near St. Mihiel, when downed by anti-aircraft fire.

Still governed by abominable weather during the month of November, our "Raiders" were grounded for all but 11 days. Although considerable progress was made by ground forces in our sector, as indicated by the capture of the powerful bastion of Metz and the city of Strasbourg, it was the opinion of the entire organization that a golden opportunity to keep the stone rolling was being stymied by nature herself. However, what few missions were flown proved quite successful. In particular were several flights in the vicinity of Waldwisse, Germany, where American columns were being harried by stubborn resistance.

A new weapon in the form of "Napalm" or more commonly known as "fire bomb" made its initial appearance along in this period. Though still in its experimental stage as far as we were concerned, this new incendiary concoction had proved its esteem from the beginning. Its telling effect was revealed convincingly on both missions of the 19th, when horse-drawn and motor convoys were attacked and virtually destroyed. The first convoy, overtaken near Aboucourt, consisted of horse-drawn artillery and motor trucks, and although it was estimated that 35 vehicles had been annihilated, actual count made on photographs taken at the scene showed over 50 pieces destroyed or rendered useless. The latter part of the month, all missions were of the close support type but in majority of instances actual observation of results was prevented by poor visibility due to clouds and haze—a condition prevalent during winter months on the continent.

In the background of the numerous deeds accomplished by flying personnel were the remarkable feats and obstacles hurdled by line crews. Operating under most adverse conditions, with cold, rain and mud as contributing factors to personal discomfort, the crews kept the ships in good condition and guns and communications apparatus operational. Mud, in particular, was a thorn in the sides of both ground and flying personnel.

In spite of comparative laxity in combat activity, our roster was diminished by the loss of two more airmen. The first to leave our ranks was Captain N. Lewin-Epstein, capable and fearless flight commander, who, just a few days hence returned from a hectic tussle with the enemy with 4-1/2 feet of his left wing completely shot off. Captain Lewin-Epstein was one of the original cast, joining us in the U.S. Second contribution to accuracy of German gunners was Lt. R.J. Armstrong.

The weatherman's predictions for the month of December were not very inspiring. According to his calculations we could only hope to eke out four days suitable for flying. However, later developments, with the good grace of God, put us through the most hectic period since the momentous invasion of France. We toiled along intermittently in the early days, lending much sought support to the Third Army by attacking enemy motor transportation, rolling stock, communications and troop concentrations until the 17th day of the month. It was on this day that the heretofore retreating German army rebounded with unexpected fury in all-out counter-attack. From reports reaching us, the "Battle of the Bulge" was reaching critical heights. General Von Rundstedt's fanatical troops were overrunning our installations and taking heavy toll of our Armies. Ground crews and pilots alike "champed at their bits" for a crack at the insipid Wehrmacht, but the weather was totally unsuited for any air operations.

Finally on 23 December 1944, heavily overcast skies cleared sufficiently to allow the 514th and other elements of the 406th Fighter Group to soar into the skies in an attempt to stem Von Rundstedt's audacious drive. By this time, the III and VIII Corps of the First Army were reeling back from the crushing momentum of the German salient, which, incidentally, was being assisted by the rejuvenated Luftwaffe. At long last, anxiety of our pilots to meet the Luftwaffe in large representation would be fulfilled.

This opportunity came into view on the first mission of the day a few miles east of Trier, Germany. Captain Bedford R. Underwood, leading on that particular occasion, sighted much to his surprise, 12 ME-109s. Calling them out to his followers, he then led them into the fray unhesitatingly. A furious dog fight ensued for several minutes and when the smoke of battle cleared, we had destroyed six ME-109s, were credited with two probables and three more damaged. Our losses were two pilots missing and one wounded.

Going down before the onslaught of German air opposition in this wild melee of aircraft were Lt. M. McLane and Lt. D. Price. Meantime Lt. M. Jones, wounded in the fracas, managed to return to home base safely.

With favorable weather as an important asset, our Thunderbolts flew tirelessly from morning to night in the next five days, compiling 30 missions. Principal assignment during this period was the village of Bastogne, Belgium, where the 101st Airborne Infantry division was completely encircled by the enemy. Hovering constantly above the beleaguered town, our trusty Thunderbolts kept the desperate Germans at bay, aborting attempts to infiltrate the Bastogne ring; burned fuel stores and supplies, and in short, made heavy in-roads into German troops and transportation.

Our zealousness to fly to the assistance of the 101st Airborne Infantry division in Bastogne can be attributed largely to friendships formed between our respective units when we were neighbors for a period on the same reservation at Mourmelon.

At any rate, in this manner the breakthrough eventually lost its crushing effect and the vital road junction in the town of Bastogne was triumphantly retained by the 101st. After the salient was smashed, value of close unit between ground and Air Forces was again reiterated.

"I never knew until now that fighter-bombers could do so much. If it had not been for your splendid air support, we should never have been able to hold out. We held the vital road junction at Bastogne with your help," said Brigadier General Anthony C. McAuliffe, Commanding the 101st Airborne Infantry Division. Later Brig. General McAuliffe paid a personal visit to our acting Group Commander, Lt. Col. L.R. Bratton, to express appreciation for valuable assistance rendered.

At a future date, the 406th Fighter Group received a cluster to the first Unit Presidential Citation on General Order dated 1 June 1945. This second commendation will be remembered by one and all for the hard work contributed toward it.

This particularly hectic activity and sudden appearance of the Luftwaffe exacted a heavy toll on our rapidly depleting ranks. Those lost in action were Lt. G.E. McKeand, Lt. A.E. Thomas, Lt. C.D. Yochum, Lt. D.O. Dorman, Lt. B.A. Sheldon, Lt. G.W. Mace, Lt. J.I. Smith and Lt. V.R. Pittala.

In the absence of Major C.B. Kelly, who had returned to the U.S. on rest leave, responsibility of Squadron Commander was capably shouldered by Major G.I. Ruddell. In turn Captain Bedford R. Underwood stepped into Major Rudell's former position as Operations Officer.

After the "Bulge" scare had been virtually eliminated, the following period was comparatively dull. We continued to fly support missions whenever weather permitted, using every trick in the trade to deal out justified punishment. Incendiaries were used liberally to create blazing infernos in the towns of Donnage, Drinklange, Benonchamp and Noville. The latter two were completely destroyed by fire, drawing praise from the ground controller on the excellence of work. Later on a factory producing war materials for the Wehrmacht was devastated in the town of Allenback, Germany.

The following commendation from Major General Maxwell D. Taylor, Commanding General of the 101st Airborne Infantry Division, was received by Major G.I. Ruddell: "The officers and men of the 101st Airborne Division wish to express to your command their appreciation of the gallant support rendered by the 514th Fighter Squadron in the recent defense of Bastogne, Belgium. The success of this defense is attributable to the shoulder to shoulder cooperation of all units involved. This division is proud to have shared the battlefield with your command."

When the air strip at Mourmelon went under repairs, our entire assemblage of ships was moved to Strip A-79, where the remaining missions in the frigid month of December were born. Besides being handicapped by sub-zero temperatures, travel between our quarters and the airfield was quite uncomfortable. This didn't last too long, however, because the 406th Fighter Group was ordered to move again.

This time we were being shunted to the very airfield near Metz that our own boys so thoroughly destroyed. The Air echelon left comfortable quarters in Mourmelon on the gray, bleak morning of 31 January 1945, arriving in Metz that afternoon. Our ground echelon came in several days later prepared for long stay. This dream was shattered, however, before even one mission could be flown from this field in the presence of both echelons. A sudden order from command had us on the road, wending our way slowly through the historic Ardennes Forest where icy roads, lined on both sides by remnants of a terrific battle, were reminiscent of our experiences in Normandy. We also had opportunity to pass through the parched ruins of Noville, Belgium, that was practically eradicated from its perch on the hillside by our own Thunderbolts.

Reaching our ultimate destination at Asch, Belgium on 7 February 1945, one and all were befuddled by the swiftness of our movement. At the same time, our transfer to the 29th Tactical Air Command was fair grounds for conjectures. Perhaps we had been singled out to assist in the Rhine river crossing? If so, this fact gave everyone a feeling of importance because hadn't we been chosen to escort General Patton's phantom tanks across the vast expanse of France?

At any rate, lack of facilities on the new base necessitated erection of tents and again we were leading a nomadic life. With least bit of procrastination, nevertheless, the 514th swung into action in support of the XIII and XVIII Corps of the 9th Army. Since spring was just around the corner, more favorable weather allowed us to participate in 26 missions—all intended as softening process for the Rhine crossing. While busily engaged in blasting openings for the ground forces, enemy aircraft was encountered and four of them were victims. Captain J.C. Bloom and Lt. J.C. Barber split honors of the day with two "bogeys" each.

Loss of personnel due to enemy action were comparatively small during this period. Captain H.L. Lewis was wounded by anti-aircraft fire while engaged in an armed reconnaissance mission, and Lts. W. Spielman, G.E. Holland and W.H. Gillian turned up missing. The unfortunate trio were carrying out escort-armed reconnaissance duties over German territory.

Major C.B. Kelly's and Captain C.H. Doyle's return to active duty on 13 February 1945 marked the beginning of many changes in key positions. Lt. Colonel Bratton's departure led to Major Kelly's elevation to that post and he, in turn, was succeeded by Captain Doyle as Squadron Commander. The vacant Operations position was filled by Captain J.C. Bloom.

Memories of our brief term of duty in Ashford, Kent, England, were rejuvenated by the sputtering roar of robot bombs as they shot over our heads on the way to either London or Antwerp. However, they weren't too numerous or bothersome.

The windy month March was ushered in in typical Air Corps fashion. Sortie after sortie stabbed and jabbed into the Rhineland, knocking out gun positions; strafing heavily trafficked roads; bombing bridges, and in general unbalancing our foe for the final blow. With guns blazing and bombs placed in strategic spots, our "Raiders," led by Capt. J.C. Bloom, worked hand in hand with General Simpson's Ninth Army effectively to chase the disorganized "Krauts" to and across the majestic waters of the Rhine.

On one of many visits to the Ruhr Valley, Capt. J.C. Bloom and his vanguard of stubby Thunderbolts effected a surprise attack on an airfield near Munster. This element of surprise prevented the Jerries from concealing their aircraft and as result 20 of them were definitely destroyed and 14 were damaged.

Halfway through the month, on 14 March 1945, Allied armies began operations to cross the last natural obstacle—the Rhine River—in their drive to the German capital. Our role in this mammoth task was centered in the sector selected for paratroop and glider landings. How well our job was done is reflected in the complete success of this venture. Once the east side of the river was reached by a sizable force, our hopes were buoyed for early finish of belligerent tactics.

Unfortunately, another of our pilots was not to see the culmination of the European conflict. The unlucky flyer was Capt. B. Sweet, veteran flight commander who was killed in a landing accident on the field. Captain Sweet was returning home from a mission when the accident happened. Last remnants of German anti-aircraft defense system earned for Lt. R.G. Garrison the non-too-cherished Purple Heart Medal by inflicting shrapnel wounds on him. Though seriously injured, Lt. Garrison managed to guide his ship back to home base.

Another month rolled around to find us still snugly settled on Asch Air Strip. The first three days were plagued by inclement weather, but the fourth returned us to assistance of the XIII and XVIII Corps whom we spearheaded to their objectives. By this time they were traveling at a remarkable rate of speed, driving deeper and deeper into Hitler's domain.

Imminence of the end was quite probable now. But, on second thought, alacrity of Nazi withdrawal into mountain strongholds in Bavaria indicated that they were determined to hold out to the last man. This factor was generally accepted as strategy to prolong the war. Therefore, our pursuit of his scattering troops necessitated proximate establishment on a base

in the Rhineland. Before this materialized, however, Capt. M.W. Sanders and his cohorts set a record for aircraft destroyed on the ground. He calmly led them to an airfield at Celle, Germany, on 8 April, where in workman-like fashion they raked up and down the airdrome to account for 28 destroyed and 15 damaged.

On the 15th day of April the move into Germany was performed to make us one of the first Air Force units settled on the east banks of the Rhine River. Our location was in the vicinity of Munster—in early days of European war—the most troublesome area for airmen. By this time, General Simpson's matchless armies hammered their way to the shores of the Elbe River, where the boundary for U.S. troop advances was located. Consequently, with the job virtually completed, all that remained for our exuberant air power was armed reconnaissance patrol over that sector. Confinement to this type of aerial work persisted until the greatest day in our memories—7 May 1945—the day we were informed of Germany's capitulation. Official announcement was made two days later.

Activity after that momentous day is quite insignificant though on two different occasions sad incidents resulted in the loss of two adept enlisted men. Surviving the rigors of war throughout our eventful itinerary across the continent, Sgt. S. Udowitz and Cpl. G.W. Satchell died in service of their country.

Filling the breach left vacant by Colonel Grossetta, Lt. Colonel Kelly stepped into the capacity of Group Commander. In turn, Captain Bloom rewarded for incessant devotion to duty, became our esteemed Squadron leader. Captain M.W. Sanders then took over the post of Operations Officer.

On 5 June 1945 we were dispatched to Nordholtz, Germany, for purpose of patrolling the Bremen area in our post-war task as the Air Force of Occupation. As this recital approached its closing stages, the 514th "Raiders" are still comfortably ensconced in proximity of the North Sea, pursuing a droll life but hoping that its past deeds will merit another call to battle.

A fitting climax to this narrative is a richly deserved tribute to all concerned for sincere, unselfish devotion to duty, high degree of enthusiasm, and unsurpassed cooperation to make the 514th Fighter Squadron one of the finest organizations in the Army Air Forces.